The Chinese Occupation of Tibet

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The roof of the world. Nestled high in the Himalayas there is a place of immense beauty, culture, religion, and torture. Tibet has been under Chinese occupation for over half a century. Before the Chinese invaded in 1950, Tibet had its own culture, government, religion, and customs. Today all of these aspects of Tibetan culture are in peril.

In the seventh century C.E., Tibet became unified under the rule of King Songsten Gampo. The Tibetans had taken over several areas that were previously under the Tang Dynasty's control (the Tang dynasty ruled China from approximately 618-907 C.E.). This grabbed the attention of the Chinese rulers and showed that Tibet was not subordinate to China during these times. Tibet was a separate and autonomous political force in the region(Goldstein, 1). Tibet was such a force, in fact, that the Tibetans captured the capital city of the Tang dynasty when the Chinese rulers stopped paying tribute to Tibet (Harrer, 168). This fact is important because later, the Chinese would claim that Tibet was part of China.

Around this same time, Buddhism came to Tibet. The first Buddhist temple was constructed around 779 C.E. (Goldstein, 1). In the eleventh century, Buddhism really gained a foothold in the previously shamanistic society and began to influence not just customs and culture, but politics as well (Goldstein, 2). Also, during the rule of the Mongols in Tibet in the thirteenth century, lamas would act as regents for the Khan (Goldstein, 3). Under Kublai Khan the leader of the Sakya Buddhist sect became the ruler of Tibet. At about this same time, the Mongols conquered China and incorporated it into their empire. At this time, both Tibet and China were joined as part of the same empire. This would lead scholars to believe later that Tibet has been a part of China since the thirteenth century (Goldstein, 4).

In 1578, the title of Dalai (meaning “ocean”, implying that his knowledge or wisdom was as vast as the ocean) was given to the leader of the Geluk sect, also known as the “Yellow Hat” sect (Goldstein, 8). In 1642, the Mongolians helped overthrow and execute the King of Tibet, installing the Dalai Lama as the ruler of Tibet (Goldstein, 9). Later, in 1705, the next Mongol leader, Lhabsang Khan executed the Tibetan regent and claimed the title of King of Tibet for himself He promised to pay the Qing dynasty of China a tribute in exchange for their support (Goldstein, 12). This act would later help further the claim that Tibet was a part of China.

China would again play a prominent role in Tibetan politics in the eighteenth century. In 1720, The Qing dynasty sent an army into Tibet to install the seventh Dalai Lama (Goldstein, 14). By 1728 over two thousand Chinese soldiers were stationed in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, with additional troops stationed throughout the region. Along with these soldiers, two Manchu agents (known as ambans) were installed to keep an eye on the Tibetan leaders as well as the Chinese garrison (Goldstein, 16). At this point in time, Tibet was ruled by an aristocratic family, under the title of regent. These regents were subordinate to the Qing dynasty and would remain so until the Qing dynasty fell from power in 1911 (Goldstein, 17). However, even during this time period, “Tibet maintained its own language, officials, and legal system, and paid no taxes or tribute to China” (Goldstein, 20). No attempt was made by the Qing emperor to absorb Tibet into China (Goldstein, 20). During the nineteenth century, Qing influence was vastly decreased to the point where Tibet conducted two wars with no interference from China (Goldstein, 21).

In 1904, British-Indian troops entered Lhasa. That same year, the

Anglo-Tibet Convention of 1904 was signed which allowed the British to establish trading posts in western Tibet (Goldstein, 24). The 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention changed some points of the 1904 Convention and reaffirmed Chinese authority over Tibet (Goldstein, 25). The next year Britain made an agreement with Russia not to enter into negotiations with the Tibetan government except through China . Up until this point, China had no real authority over Tibet. After these signed conventions, however, the Qing dynasty decided to take a more active role in the administration of Tibet (Goldstein, 26). In 1911, the Qing dynasty was overthrown.

At the time of the fall of the Qing dynasty, the Dalai Lama was exiled in India. As soon as the Qing dynasty fell, he began planning for his return. In 1913, the Dalai Lama reentered Lhasa and expelled all Chinese officials and troops from Tibet. The Dalai Lama sent a telegraph to the new Chinese government stating that he "intended to exercise both temporal and ecclesiastic rule in Tibet" (Goldstein, 31). To some, this amounted to a declaration of Tibetan independence.

In 1913 and 1914, British, Tibetan, and Chinese officials met in Simla, India. During the years in which China had a large presence in Tibet (1905-1911), the British were afraid of the Chinese on the border of their land (British India). At this conference, the heart of the "Tibetan Question"would come to the forefront. The Tibetan official claimed that Tibet was an independent state and that the Dalai Lama is the only ruler. On the other hand, the Chinese official claimed that Tibet formed an important part of the Chinese Republic and denounced Tibet and Britain for trying to "interrupt the continuity of this territorial integrity"(Goldstein, 32).

Britain was not fully prepared to support the independence of Tibet as it could possibly hurt British trade relations with Hong Kong and China. But at the

same time, they did not wish for Tibet to be under the control of China. This dichotomy produced the Simla Convention of 1914. In it, Tibet was to be autonomous from China, however, the influence China could have in Tibet was recognized. It allowed for the administration of Tibet by its own officials and limited the number of Chinese allowed in Lhasa (one commissioner and an escort of up to 300). Britain had thus accomplished its goal of creating a "buffer zone" between China and British India. Due to differences on where the lines should be drawn on the map, China did not actually ratify the convention (Goldstein, 33). Later, the British signed a note with Tibet saying that each would adhere to the unsigned convention. This allowed Britain to pursue relations with Tibet without consulting the Chinese government but at the same time making no recognition of Tibetan independence (Goldstein, 34). "Despite lofty rhetoric about freedom and self-determination, Western democracies maintained a consistent policy of yielding to Chinese sensibilities" (Goldstein, 40).

In 1933, the thirteenth Dalai Lama died. Regent Reting Rinpoche ruled Tibet in the absence of the Dalai Lama and two years after his death began the search for the next Dalai Lama (Avedon, 4). Sometime near the end of 1937 or early in 1938 the fourteenth Dalai Lama was discovered in the north-eastern province of Tibet known as Amdo (Avedon, 7). During this time the Tibetan government was headed by the regent, but every important post below the regent was held both by lama and a Tibetan nobleman to ensure both secular and religious rule and to keep either side from becoming too powerful (Avedon, 18).

In 1949, the Communists won the civil war raging in China and the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong inaugurated the People's

Republic of China (PRC) (Goldstein, 37). Amidst much fear of Communist infiltration in Tibet, the government closed the Chinese liaison office in Lhasa and expelled all Chinese from the capital (Avedon, 26). Around this same time, the Chinese stepped up their rhetoric of “liberation” for Tibet. Chinese radio began to air claims that Tibet was in need of “liberation” (Avedon, 27).

On 7 October 1950, 84,000 troops of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet's eastern borders (Avedon, 30). Fierce fighting between Chinese and Tibetan forces lasted only eleven days, with the Chinese troops readily crushing the Tibetan resistance. Chinese officials claimed that its troops were in Tibet “to free” Tibetans from “imperialist oppression” (Avedon, 32). Amidst all this turmoil, the fourteenth Dalai Lama was enthroned as the ruler of Tibet on 17 November 1950 (Avedon, 33).

China invaded Tibet for several reasons. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) saw the will for Tibetan independence as a sign of a western plot to dismember China (Shakya, xxix). China believed Tibet to be part of China and claimed that it was going to “liberate” Tibet (Shakya, 3). China also wanted to impose a Marxist state on the Tibetans for their own economic benefit. In order to do this, China planned on destroying the Tibetan way of life, especially religious life as the communists were vehemently anti-religious (Avedon, 34). This destruction, though, would not really begin until about 1956 (Shakya, NLR, 42). China also wanted to annex Tibet for strategic reasons. Tibet was the perfect place if China ever wanted to launch a land attack against either India or the USSR. Additionally, Tibet also had a wealth of natural resources that China was eager to extract (Avedon, 41).

On 23 May 1951 Tibetan officials (not the Dalai Lama) were pressured into signing the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” (Avedon, 35). Ironically, this agreement was aimed at legitimizing the violent invasion of Tibet. Among the points of this agreement were: Tibet acknowledges that it was part of China, gives China post-facto consent for the PLA invasion, lays the ground work for the integration of the Tibetan Army into the PLA, and grants China exclusive authority to conduct Tibet's foreign affairs (Lixiong, 83). India's Prime Minister at the time, Nehru noted that the agreement was signed “without joy and under compulsion of circumstances” (Shakya, NLR, 53).

As of 9 September 1951 over 3,000 PLA troops were stationed in Lhasa with an additional 17,000 to enter within three months bringing the total to 20,000 (Avedon, 37). This time period also saw the first famine in Tibetan history which was attributed to the Chinese invasion and occupation (Avedon, 38). In 1954, the Dalai Lama was invited to China to discuss matter with Mao Zedong (Tapontsang, 57). In 1955 the Chinese declared that religious life was useless (Tapontsang, 61). The real atrocities of the Chinese occupation were just beginning.

The mid-1950s was a time when monks and nuns came under incredible persecution from the Chinese occupiers. One of the first moves was to force monks and nuns to marry, essentially forcing them to break their life-long vow of celibacy (Tapontsang, 61). Later they would force monks to abandon one of the principles of their religion, the creed that all life is sacred, and force the monks to kill either animals or each other (Tapontsang, 64). The Chinese began public humiliation and torture of monks in 1956 (Tapontsang, 68). The year 1956 also saw the beginning of aerial bombardment of rural areas of Tibet (Tapontsang, 75).

In 1956, the Dalai Lama visited India and attempted to persuade them to help Tibet (Avedon, 45). At this point in time, India was a fairly new country having only received its independence from Britain some nine years earlier. India did not want to risk confrontation with China (which was very powerful) and therefore could not overtly support the Tibetans even though some members of the country's congress wanted to help (Avedon, 46). The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.

In early 1959, several Tibetans found out that there was a plot by the Chinese to attempt to kidnap and kill the Dalai Lama (Avedon, 50). Responding to this threat, thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Jewel Park where the Dalai Lama was in order to protect him. On 17 March 1959 the Chinese fired artillery shells into the Jewel Park thereby inciting what is known as the National Uprising of 1959 (Avedon, 54). The Dalai Lama and his cabinet decided to flee Lhasa. Three days of serious fighting occurred in the Tibetan capital (Avedon, 59). The Dalai Lama and his cabinet sneak out of the palace at night and begin their trek towards India. On 28 March 1959 the Chinese dissolved the Tibetan government and take direct control of Tibet (Avedon, 58). It is estimated that 87,000 Tibetans died in the 1959 National Uprising (Avedon, 124).

Around this same time the Chinese begin many social reforms both in China proper and Tibet, collectively known as the “Cultural Revolution”. One major component of their reforms was land and resource redistribution. The other major component was the destruction of or “liberation” from religious life. Much land was redistributed to peasants with a majority of this land having previously been owned by monasteries and the elite Tibetan families (Lixiong, 90). During the Chinese occupation, over ninety-nine percent of all monasteries were destroyed or severely

damaged (Harrer, 125). Certain scholars have believed that Tibetans saw these reforms as hostile and colonial in nature. It is also believed that Tibetans would have supported some of these reforms had the communists not instituted anti-religious policies which enraged many Tibetans (Shakya, NLR, 56). The “Cultural Revolution” would last until 1976 when Chairman Mao Zedong died (Tapontsang, 185).

On 31 March 1959 the Dalai Lama reached the Indian border where he was greeted by Indian soldiers (Avedon, 60). On 18 April 1959 the Dalai Lama issued a statement to the world press (Avedon, 67). His statement made several important points including: it claimed the Seventeen-Point Agreement had been signed “under pressure from the Chinese government”, it also claimed that from the PLA's arrival in Lhasa the Tibetan government had next to no autonomy, and it refuted Chinese claims that the Dalai Lama had been kidnapped (Avedon, 68). The Chinese government quickly issued a rebuttal. In their statement, the Chinese claimed that Tibet's independence bids were simply a scheme of British imperialism and that Tibetan institutions had all been put in place by the Chinese in Peking (Avedon, 68).

Thousands of Tibetans would begin to flee Tibet into India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Eventually, over one hundred thousand (100,000) Tibetans would become refugees (Avedon, 72). But only a small portion of the country's lamas would be able to escape (Avedon, 92). Tibetans began to reconstruct their society in many refugee camps (Avedon, 88-90). The Dalai Lama would set up the Tibetan Government-In-Exile in Dharamsala, India. At the highest level of the government sat the Dalai Lama and his cabinet (called the Kashag). Immediately below them were six

departments (and two sub-departments). Alongside these departments was the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies, a sort of parliament (Avedon, 106). On 10 March 1963 a constitution was drafted (Avedon, 107).

During the Chinese occupation, Tibet suffered many hardships. Many Tibetans were imprisoned, mostly for their defiance of the Chinese occupation. The Panchen Lama (Tibet's second highest-ranking incarnate lama) began to speak against Chinese policies and was labeled an enemy of China and imprisoned for over 10 years (Lixiong, 99). By 1978 the Chinese held over 100,000 prisoners (Harrer, 97). Torture, both physical and psychological, was common in prisons. Daily propaganda meetings in which the Chinese exalted themselves and Tibetan customs and religion were diminished were rituals both in and out of prison (Tapontsang, 82). These meetings were expanded upon in prison with daily reeducation classes (Tapontsang, 111). The reeducation meetings were often to persecute prisoners for any sort of religious activity, to show how much better Chinese military technology was than American, or to glamorize new military achievements (Tapontsang, 112). The Chinese placed too much of an emphasis on wheat production which hurt the soil, making large tracts of land incapable of supporting farms (Shakya, 372). “The ultra-leftist policies of the Cultural Revolution inflicted tremendous human and economic damage on Tibet” (Lixiong, 98). Also during the 1970s the Chinese began to impose a system of people's communes on the farmers of Tibet.

The Chinese used several forms of torture in order to stifle dissent. One of the favorite practices of Chinese torturers was bamboo torture. This involved very sharp splinters of bamboo being inserted underneath the fingernails and

pushed up farther than anything should go underneath one's fingernails (Tapontsang, 91). Prisoners were forced to urinate and defecate on religious artifacts and even made to use religious scriptures as toilet paper (Tapontsang, 150). Prisoners were also forced to speak Chinese and persecuted if they spoke their native Tibetan tongue (Tapontsang, 152). Another method employed by the Chinese was that of the “thamzing” or struggle-session. These were sessions in which prisoners were made to denounce their friends and relatives for actions which were considered “counter-revolutionary”.

The Chinese also tried to impress upon the Tibetans their form of personality cult based around Chairman Mao Zedong (Tapontsang, 147). One Chinese writer even went so far as to say that Chairman Mao replaced the Tibetans' native gods (Lixiong, 94). Others claimed that the Tibetans were simply trying to exist. It was noted that “the instant it was permitted, Tibetans not only shook off the uniforms of the Cultural Revolution but pulled down the red banners and hoisted prayer flags in the valleys, discarded the Chairman's 'Thoughts' and brought out long-hidden prayer-books, restored their native gods to their altars and sent thousands of young people to join the monasteries” (Shakya, NLR, 48). Given the choice, the Tibetans showed their preference for their own gods and religion.

In 1976, several key figures in the Chinese Communist Party died including the Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, the commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army, Zhu De, and the Chairman, Mao Zedong. The so-called “Gang of Four” (four hardliners in the CCP) was arrested and the outlook in Tibet began to brighten (Tapontsang, 185). In 1978 Deng Xiaoping became the leader of the CCP and began to attempt to redress some of the wrongs committed during the Cultural

Revolution. Prisoners still serving sentences from the 1959 National Uprising were released and up to 6,000 others who were branded as rebels had these label removed (Lixiong, 100). This represented a departure from the earlier directives aimed at Tibet by the Chinese government. These new leaders rejected Mao's ideal that the nationalities problem was a class problem and began new attempts at getting minority leaders to cooperate with the CCP. Around this time, the Panchen Lama was released and reinstated to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee (CPPCC) a body that didn't have any true power, but a move that nonetheless showed that the party's policies towards Tibet were becoming more accommodating (Shakya, 372). The Chinese government also made moves to compensate landlords that had land and property seized earlier. Over 2,300 Tibetans would receive some form of compensation (Shakya, 373).

In March of 1979, a Tibetan, Gyalo Dhundup, met with Deng Xiaoping with the permission of the Dalai Lama to discuss the question of Tibet. Xiaoping seemed willing to address Tibet's grievances, but only if Tibet stopped calling for its independence and separation from China (Shakya, 376). Later in 1979 the Dalai Lama was allowed to send a fact-finding mission into Tibet to determine the conditions the Tibetan people were faced with each day. The reception that was given to the Dalai Lama's delegation by the Tibetans was overwhelmingly positive. Many Tibetans would tell the delegation how horrible the conditions were under the Chinese occupation (Shakya, 377). These visits had two important results. The government-in-exile could now rebuff Chinese claims of social progress. Also, the visits showed the incredible popular support for the Dalai Lama, thereby showing the Tibetan faith had not been lost (Shakya, 378).

On 29 May 1980 Hu Yaobang, a CCP official, convened a meeting of over 4,500 members of the Tibetan regional Communist Party and the CPPCC. In a speech he gave, he acknowledged that the CCP had failed in Tibet. Hu went on to say:

> "We feel that our party has let the Tibetan people down. We feel bad! The sole purpose of our Communist Party is to work for the happiness of the people, to do good things for them. We have worked nearly thirty years, but the life of the Tibetan people has not notably improved. Are we [the Party] not to blame?" (Shakya, 381).

While one of the major goals of the CCP was the eradication of poverty, the living standards of many Tibetans had actually gone down (Shakya, 381). Hu even went so far as to compare the situation in Tibet to colonialism. Hu also made several proposals regarding Tibet:

1. "Tibet should enjoy autonomous rule, and Tibetan cadres should have the courage to protect their own national interests;
2. Tibetan farmers and herdsmen should be exempt from taxation and purchase quotas;
3. Ideologically oriented economic policies should be changed to practical ones, geared to local circumstances;
4. Central government's financial allocations to Tibet should be greatly increased;
5. Tibetan culture should be strengthened;
6. Han cadres should step aside in favor of Tibetan ones." (Lixiong, 101).

These reforms were welcomed by Tibetans. The following years became a "period of 'recuperation'" (Shakya, 382). The farming communes were disbanded which allowed farmers to make their own decisions regarding crops (Shakya, 383). It is estimated that half a million Tibetans suffered more hardship because of these communes (Lixiong, 100). Hu also criticized the Chinese "cadres" (people responsible for the administration of Tibet) for practices which he did not agree with:

> "(1) violating the CCP's nationality policy and impairing national unity; (2) taking advantage of their position and power to assign jobs to their own men; (3) practicing factionalism; (4) wasting state and collective property; (5) maintaining special privileges by giving gifts and banquets" (Shakya, 383).

The Chinese were eager to entice the Dalai Lama back to China and in 1981 issued a Five-Point Proposal to the Dalai Lama:

1. "The Dalai Lama should recognize that China has now entered a new period of stability and economic change. If he doubts the reforms, he should observe the changes for the next few years.
2. The Dalai Lama should not raise the history of repression that followed the suppression of the 1959 rebellion.
3. The Chinese Government 'sincerely welcomes' the Dalai Lama and his followers to return to the motherland. China hopes that the Dalai Lama would contribute to upholding China's unity and promote solidarity between Han and Tibetan nationalities.
4. The Dalai Lama would have the same statues as he had enjoyed before 1959. He may be appointed Vice-Chairman of the NPX. But it would be necessary that he should not live in Tibet or hold any position in Tibet as there are younger Tibetans who have taken office and are doing their jobs well. He may visit Tibet as often as he likes.
5. When the Dalai Lama returns he may make press statements, and arrangements would be made to receive him by a suitable minister." (Shakya, 384-385).

This was seen by the Dharamsala government as a way to reduce the entire Tibetan question to a simple matter of the Dalai Lama's personal status. The Chinese had restricted the Panchen Lama under similar terms to the Five-Point Proposal (Shakya, 385).

In 1982, the Chinese met with a delegation from Dharamsala. The two major components of the Dalai Lama's proposal were the unification of all ethnic Tibetan-inhabited regions (see Figure 1) as one political and administrative entity and that Tibet should be given a similar status to Taiwan or Hong Kong (Shakya, 386). The Chinese refused these proposals and said that only the Five-Point Proposal was open to negotiation (Shakya, 387).

As the 1980s progressed, conditions became better in Tibet. The reforms of the early 1980s helped increase the per capita income in the agriculture sectors (Shakya, 388). Daily life became more relaxed for Tibetans and they were able to wear their traditional clothing again instead of uniforms (Shakya, 398). The Chinese also began to reduce their settlements in Tibet. Between 1980 and 1985 the Chinese population of Tibet decreased by 42 percent (Lixiong, 104). By 1981, Tibetans made up approximately fifty-five percent of the cadres in Tibet. This, however, did not necessarily reflect a shift in power from the Chinese to the Tibetans (Shakya, 390).

In 1984 the Chinese hardened its policies towards the Dalai Lama. A CCP official claimed that the Dalai Lama was guilty of treason, but that if he admitted his mistakes, the Chinese government would welcome him back. The Dalai Lama sent another delegation to Beijing to renew his requests made earlier and to call for the demilitarization of Tibet, making it a “zone of peace”. The Chinese rejected this as well as any discussion of larger issues (Shakya, 399). The Chinese failed to recognize that there was a “question of Tibet” and denied the Dalai Lama's offer to visit Tibet in 1985 (Shakya, 400).

In 1986 the CCP allowed the Tibetans to celebrate the Monlam ceremony, the first time it had been allowed since 1967. Pictures of the Dalai Lama began circulating again and many monasteries underwent reconstruction (Shakya, 402). Hundreds of young boys were sent to monasteries to study for becoming monks. Tibetans were now able to fund these reconstruction projects privately, thereby preventing the Chinese from blocking these projects administratively. These relaxed regulations “awaken[ed] deep seated grievances” among the Tibetan people

thereby pushing reforms past what the Chinese could control (Shakya, 403). In 1986 Tibetan was declared to be the main language of administration and that it would also be taught in primary schools (Shakya, 407).

The political culture within Tibet began to move away from independence and towards changing policies for the benefit of Tibetans. “They [the Tibetans] saw that the new changes had allowed them to demand greater freedom without engendering Chinese hostility” (Shakya, 407). Tibetan leaders were willing to work to maximize the limited freedoms afforded to their people by legislative changes in China (Shakya, 407). Beijing seemed willing to concede many of Tibet's demands so long as Tibetans did not overtly call for independence (Shakya, 408). However, even during this period, there was still much restlessness among the Tibetan people.

On 27 September 1987 twenty one monks staged a pro-independence rally in Lhasa. They were beaten and arrested by the Chinese police. On 1 October different monks staged another protest and they were also beaten and arrested. While the monks were being held in a jail, over a thousand Tibetans gathered round, burned down the jail doors and released the imprisoned monks. Chinese police fired into the crowd killing several Tibetans. The Chinese believed that the first demonstration was aimed to coincide with a statement the Dalai Lama was making in Washington DC to the United States congress, in an attempt to bring international pressure on China (Shakya, 416). Protests continued off and on for the next two years (Shakya, 418).

On 5 March 1989 the largest anti-Chinese demonstration since 1959 occurred in Lhasa. The protest lasted three days during which between 75 and 750

Tibetans were killed by Chinese police. On 8 March the Chinese imposed martial law in Tibet (Shakya, 430). Protesting continued throughout the next month both within Tibet and around the world (Shakya, 431). Chinese policies towards Tibet would change after these protests. The new policies would eliminate Tibet's special status and focus more on the greater integration of Tibet with rest of China (Shakya, 432).

The “question of Tibet” as it is sometimes called is not a simple question. Nor does it have a simple answer. Both sides (Tibet and China) make claims about who should control the region of Tibet. There is historical evidence that supports both sides of the argument. Through the course of research the case for Tibetan independence appears to be stronger for several reasons. One reason is that the historical record sides with the Tibetans more than the Chinese. China never truly ruled Tibet until the PLA invaded and occupied in 1950. Even in the times of the Qing dynasty, the Manchu ambans did not control Tibet in any way. The Tibetans only looked to the Chinese emperor when they faced foreign invasion (Shakya, NLR, 51). It was even said that the ambans showed the Dalai Lama “all the ceremony which could have been accorded to any independent sovereign” (Shakya, NLR, 51). The viceroy of British India at the turn of the twentieth century, Lord Curzon, said that Chinese rule over Tibet was nothing more than a “constitutional fiction” (Shakya, NLR, 52).

Chinese atrocities and treatment of Tibetans and their culture also degrades the legitimacy of their claims to rule Tibet. Literally hundreds of thousands of Tibetans were imprisoned for their political views. Many of these prisoners were tortured in horribly inhumane ways. The Chinese have continually tried to erase

Tibetan religious life and culture in a bid to solidify their control over the region. The atrocities committed by the Chinese would turn the stomachs of any compassionate human being.

Today, there is a large international effort to achieve freedom for the Tibetan people. The International Campaign to Free Tibet and the Free Tibet campaign are only a few of the groups fighting for Tibetan independence and freedom. The Dalai Lama continues to rally international support and calls for Tibetan freedom. The Dalai Lama is still in exile today residing with his government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India.

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